

FOOTBALLLESS

A film outline by Jonathan D Steinhoff, 7.4.13©

JOE DIMBEAN, an astronaut from Earth enroute to a distant planet beyond our solar system, finds technical difficulties require that he make an emergency landing. Fortunately a previously unknown world begins appearing on his radar, presenting a perfect opportunity. The forced landing is successful.

CITIZENS of the planet come to meet **JOE**, and are as surprised as he to learn of the existence of life on a planet other than their own.

JOE becomes an overnight international Celebrity on the planet, **SHOWIZ**. Among the many things **JOE** learns about on this somewhat parallel world, one major difference stands out:

There is no separation between government, religion, and the entertainment industry. It is all fused together into one entity with many complex subdivisions. The Celebrities are regarded as artists on a mission- political, cultural, a mission centered around themselves, religious or missions for social causes, or missions that don't fall into pre-existing mission categories.

Due to **JOE's** sudden, enormous Celebrity status, owing of course to his being the only outerspace alien anyone had ever seen, he is suddenly, in certain ways, the most important person on the planet. And all eyes are upon **JOE** when he blurts out on live TV, to the entire planet of **SHOWIZ**, that their world is "Football-less" ("....and I don't mean the English word 'football', which is really soccer, I mean the American word 'football'", explains **JOE**, though clearly making a distinction lost on his audience).

Instantly, through electronic international consensus of the **CITIZENS** of **SHOWIZ**, the planet is officially renamed **FOOTBALLLESS**.

JOE continues to receive the full treatment- appearing on TV, etc. endlessly; is talked about non-stop on all of the entertaino-politico TV shows, etc. **JOE DIMBEAN** of Earth is the big new sensation!

Then, at first gradually, then not so gradually, everyone loses interest in **JOE**. On this world Celebrities often come and go with a strange swiftness. **JOE** is "demoted" to becoming an actor playing a secondary character on a TV sitcom. The planet is still named **FOOTBALLLESS**, yet **JOE** is a mere has-been whose previous importance is something essentially forgotten. Whenever he attempts to remind people of who he was to them he is invariably met with scorn, as if he is seriously demeaning himself by breaching a societal taboo. The extremely frequent meteoric rises and declines of Celebrities that have permeated **FOOTBALLLESS** from time immemorial is something unknown to **JOE**.

Celebrities are perhaps the key component in the governing of this world, therefore, many protocols and other aspects of being / no longer being a Celebrity are

presumed understood by one and all, unless one is deliberately choosing to be crass, vulgar, etc.

As is common, JOE's already significantly reduced status gradually reduces even further, until he is barely scraping by at some common job as a non-entity.

However, a sudden, new development in the world appears to involve JOE.

A Celebrity named RONBOX is on his way out, a fact that is established when his just-released, third music album is already doing poorly on the charts. This triggers anger in extreme RONBOX fans throughout a certain region of the world, who do a "fan-regroup" – uniformly uniting around some new, upcoming, supposedly similar Celebrity on a supposedly similar "mission" (a frequently used word). Fan-regroups are a common social pattern, as new upcoming Celebrities on a mission frequently appear on the scene, disappearing from the scene just as frequently. Some of the missions leftover by the has-beens do not have much to them for new Celebrities to bother with; other times the word "mission" is more correctly used, and the continuing of the mission would seem more essential.

In the case of RONBOX, the fan-regroup's new focus is a deranged unknown named SHEESHK, whose mission is to advocate terrorism. Apparently no one is noticing or taking seriously SHEESHK's terrorism interests, unnoticed in the confusion that results whenever someone is vying for Celebrity status, extreme statements / actions all taken with a grain of salt, in that creating a sensational effect with a provocative statement is too often part of the Celebrity's accepted social facade. Fans of RONBOX are persuaded SHEESHK is similar enough for their fan-regroup because his mission is much like the one RONBOX was on - RONBOX always complained that he thought someone was behind the air-conditioning never working at his concerts, and that he hopes someone pays for it someday. That was his mission. He was carrying on the mission of has-been RINBOX, who had the same problem with air conditioning at his concerts. SHEESHK's mission of terrorism was believed similar enough, especially as the fans were anxious for a fan-regroup to occur immediately now that RONBOX was on his way out.

At this point SHEESHK makes plans for channeling his growing status. SHEESHK is, in so many words, the upcoming Celebrity designated to take over RONBOX's mission (or more accurately, designated to take over RONBOX's fans), which itself had been a mission to take over the mission of has-been RINBOX (and possibly the mission of others before them). A serious terrorist movement under SHEESHK develops, the apparent object being to force everyone in the world to worship a god SHEESHK believes in, Maureen The Goddess, who, like many deities, is invisible / non-present, etc.

On this planet where enormous power in the hybrid religion / entertainment / government realm changes hands with amazing speed and frequency, SHEESHK's ambitions do not seem to be entirely unachievable.

In being extremely deranged, SHEESHK is not only out-of-touch with reality, he is also out-of-touch with the non-reality of the Celebrity system under which he lives, in much the same way as would be a person from another planet. Yet SHEESHK somehow vividly remembers the time when JOE DIMBEAN was number one, and he has fixated on the ridiculous idea that JOE still possesses enormous power over everyone, as he would if he was still number one. This might be comparable to the occasional Southerner who isn't sure the American Civil War is over. SHEESHK obsesses over the power he imagines JOE still possesses, and devises a convoluted scheme to control it – the power that in reality no longer resides with JOE.

SHEESHK believes that, by developing complex clues to leave “on the doorstep” of JOE, the way a deranged serial killer might leave his convoluted riddle-like clues on the authorities’ doorstep, JOE can gradually be intimidated into capitulating to SHEESHK, all of his presumed immense power to become at SHEESHK’s disposal. The clues are coordinated with SHEESHK’s huge terrorist attacks, so that JOE, in seeing what he is “meant” to see, becomes somewhat concerned. As intended.

For example, a few days before the tallest building in the world is destroyed by SHEESHK’s TERRORISTS, JOE receives a photo in the mail of the 2nd tallest building in the world, with the caption, “Don’t be Number 2”. JOE finds no indication of who this advertisement is from, though is disinclined to attach anything to it until several days later, when the tallest building is destroyed. Even then, JOE pays little attention.

From this point forward, a clue of some sort appears on JOE’s “doorstep” every single time there is about to be a major terrorist act. Each time, the clue appears benign until after the terrorist act (e.g., JOE chances to notice a personalized license plate indicating the name of an obscure city on the other side of the world, as the car with the license plate stops short in front of him; the next day, the name of the exact same obscure city is on everyone’s lips due to a major international terrorist act). JOE can easily recognize the pattern, that he is the only member of the intersecting set, that many may have seen the license plate that day, but of those, who else had repeatedly, for every major terrorist act, again found something ultimately related appearing on their “doorstep”? Only he. Only Joe. Only he, Joe. Joe was the only one. The only one this was happening to.... But who was Joe to anyone?

JOE was among the few who shared SHEESHK’s false impression that if they name the planet you’re on after your idea, you’re still very, very, extremely important somehow. However, FOOTBALLLESS did not work that way, something which SHEESHK would have realized if he was not deranged, and something which JOE would have realized if he had been born on FOOTBALLLESS instead of Earth. Therefore, JOE imagines a real basis for why someone might single him out as still possessing great power in that world.

JOE struggles to bring these deranged clues to the attention of the authorities, or at least a Celebrity important enough to bring the matter to some other Celebrity, perhaps one as important as a TV commercial actor.

JOE's request for an investigation by the authorities would always be an absurd one, as it made no sense that he, Joe, of everyone in the world, would be receiving mysterious clues from SHEESHK'S TERRORISTS that you just had to stop and figure out and then you'd see. No, JOE could only sound completely crazy. JOE was typical of the planet's big, powerless, non-entity nobodies. JOE insists he isn't, as he's the one who renamed their whole planet. This is dismissed as a vulgar, uncouth assertion, and so their original question stands - why would Joe ever be the one person in the world to receive such clues? The only answer is, he must be imagining it, and must be deranged, and must not be worth taking seriously for one minute.

JOE is eventually able to piece together that the entire planet will shortly be obliterated, assuming SHEESHK's latest recording goes to number 1, and everyone thinks it will. JOE sees that even with the short-term power, SHEESHK has already devised a way to destroy everything and everyone. Though deranged, SHEESHK is able to figure out how the planet's vulnerability to every new Celebrity can be seen as a good thing, in terms of his desire to destroy the planet.

It gradually emerges that, although SHEESHK has convinced himself the reason he is leaving behind clues for JOE is in order to somehow get at Joe's imagined great power, the clues are actually SHEESHK's cries for help, a challenge for someone to track him down, stop him, if they can, stop him before he kills again. SHEESHK chose the one person in the world who is from another planet to receive his cries for help, in the same way one imagines an Earth lunatic might desire the special attention of an outerspace alien for reasons that may significantly differ from those of sane people desiring such outerspace alien attention.

JOE remains powerless to convince anyone that he's anything but a monotonous, obnoxious has-been. Fortunately, he is able to escape in his freshly repaired spacecraft, just as it is being announced everywhere that SHEESHK has gone to number one, which is followed about 10 seconds later by the entire planet blowing up.

When JOE returns to Earth, he dodges the space crew sent to recover him from the space vessel, preferring a life of anonymity instead, building a hidden cabin in the woods, growing a beard. On TV his mysterious absence from the space vessel gives rise to an international cult around how outerspace aliens must be responsible, JOE's celebrity status in-absentia significantly surpassing normal celebrity status.

THE END